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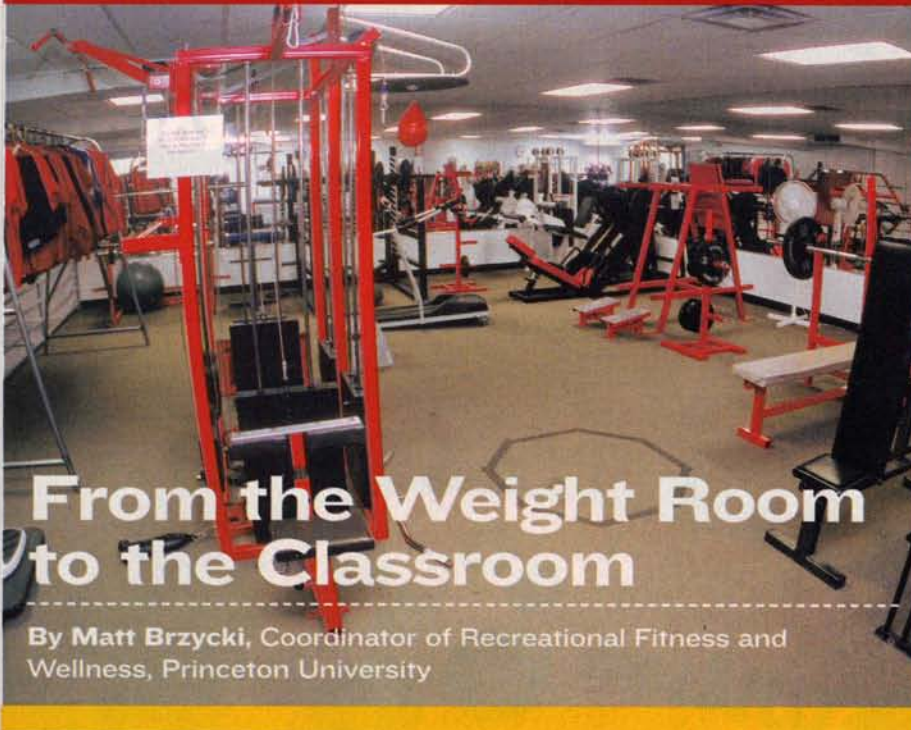


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From the Weight Room to the Classroom

By Matt Brzycki, Coordinator of Recreational Fitness and Wellness, Princeton University

Although the weight room is obviously the best place in which to teach the principles of weight training, some of the instruction will require an area with a classroom ambiance that will facilitate the teaching of the underlying concepts.

In teaching a course at the scholastic level, you will have to cover a wide variety of topics such as basic anatomy and muscular function, the principles of strength training, aerobic training and flexibility training, program design, safety, and the effective use of the exercise equipment.

Basic concepts in nutrition can also be taught, as long as care is taken not to overstep your bounds in that area unless you're also a registered dietician.

Some students will undoubtedly want more detailed information and seek you out as the "resident expert"; others will simply want to work out on the equipment.

EVALUATING STUDENTS

To evaluate your students, you must choose an appropriate grading system. Long gone are the days

when grades were given on the basis of how much a student could lift in the bench press or how well a student looked in "gym clothes." Such criteria only rewarded the students who possessed favorable genetics for strength training.

It should also be remembered that grading on physical improvement could be unfair since the degree and speed of the training response are also a function of individual genetics. Students should be given grades based upon their attendance, attitude, class participation, and correct technique in performing exercises.

Written evaluations will measure the students' understanding of the course material and their grasp of the specific objectives. It will also motivate your students and provide them with feedback on how well they have learned.

The nature and degree of difficulty of written examinations will differ, depending upon the level of comprehension that you want your students to achieve. Obviously, an evaluation of seniors will be much more detailed than an evaluation of sophomores.

Regardless of the level of compre-

hension being tested, it's important to create tests and test questions that make valid assessments of your students' comprehension of the instructional objectives. Writing good test questions is truly an art that demands much time, thought and effort.

TEST QUESTIONS

For the most part, test questions fall into two main categories: subjective and objective. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, plus some general guidelines that are applicable to all types of questions.

You should give your students the "ground rules" for each type of test question. The point values for each should also be indicated so let your students know how much their answers are worth.

The examination shouldn't contain any optional questions. The use of such questions changes the nature of the tests so that they cannot be compared fairly or accurately. Every question on the test should be important and every student should be expected to respond to it.

Let's take a closer look at the different types of test questions and learn how to craft them in an effective manner.

SUBJECTIVE TEST QUESTIONS

Traditionally referred to as "essay," subjective questions involve responses that contain the logical organization of written information. Essay questions are good for testing general explanations, interpretations and problem-solving concepts – all of which may be difficult to measure with objective test questions.

Essay questions can also be developed faster than other types of questions, but are difficult to grade objectively. With a large class, the correction of essay questions can also be extremely time-consuming and inconsistent, favoring the students who write well.

Guidelines for preparing a good

essay test question: First of all, you must write the questions clearly so that all of your students will interpret them the same way. The information you request shouldn't be too general. It should ask for specific knowledge, using clear and precise directives, such as describe, outline, define, compare, contrast, explain, discuss, and list.

It's a good idea to make an answer key that lists the major points of each answer. This will make the grading much easier and more consistent.

Subjective test questions include long-answer, short-answer, and completion. These types of questions are very similar in format and only vary in the length of the response required by the student.

Following is a brief description of these three types of questions:

Long-Answer. This type of essay question is used for answers that require anywhere from several paragraphs to several pages. The long-answer essay question is useful when a very detailed explanation is desired.

Short-Answer. The format of the short-answer essay question is very similar to that of the long-answer essay question, except that it's used for answers that require only a few sentences.

Completion. The completion question is also related to the essay question format. Sometimes referred to as "fill in the blank," completion questions require a response of about three words or less – a significant word or term. When writing completion questions, you need only one or two blanks near the end of the sentence.

OBJECTIVE TEST QUESTIONS

The biggest advantage of such test questions is that the grading doesn't involve subjective judgments, so that the answers can be graded quickly and efficiently. For these reasons, objective tests are the most widely

used type of written evaluation.

One of the main criticisms of objective questions has been that they encourage guessing. Indeed, how do you really know whether your students actually knew the requested information or simply guessed correctly?

Objective test questions are excellent for evaluating definitions, facts, techniques, and terminologies. Additionally, a well-constructed question can measure insight, interpretation and understanding of the subject material. However, such questions are often difficult and time-consuming to prepare.

The two most popular types of objective test questions are multiple-choice and true-false:

Multiple-Choice. This is the most frequently used form of objective test question. It is also probably the most difficult type of question to construct properly. It consists of two parts: the stem and several alternatives.

The *stem* is also known as the "question" or "preliminary statement." It should be simple, concise and in the form of a complete question or statement (although testing authorities recommend that the stem be in the form of a question).

If any questions are stated negatively, the negative words – such as no, not, none, never, and except – should be emphasized through underlining, capitalizing, or boldfacing. Finally, the stem shouldn't give clues to the answers of other questions on the test.

The alternatives are also known as "choices"; the incorrect alternatives are known as "distracters" or "foils." The number of alternatives usually ranges from three to five.

All of the alternatives should be about the same length and follow a parallel structure that's grammatically correct. In addition, the placement of the correct answer among the distracters shouldn't follow a repeating pattern. In other words,

the correct answers should appear sometimes first, sometimes last, and sometimes in the middle. Lastly, all of the alternatives should seem plausible and reasonable.

This type of question greatly reduces the likelihood of good guessing. In fact, it's been suggested that in a 10-question test in which each question offers four alternatives, the probability of getting seven right answers by luck is one in a thousand.

True-False. The other popular type of objective test question. A true-false question should be stated in positive terms unless the negative word is emphasized. The true-false format should contain even amounts of true and false statements.

Once again, the answers should follow no particular sequence. In answering the true-false question, students will sometimes make a "T" that looks very much like an "F." To avoid confusion, have your students use an "A" for a true response and a "B" for a false response or spell out the words "true" and "false."

The major drawback of a true-false question is that a student has a 50% chance of guessing the right answer since there are only two alternatives. This makes it even more critical for true-false questions to be properly designed.

SAMPLE FORMAT

Figure 1 offers a sample format for a written test. The figure includes two examples for each of the five different types of subjective and objective test questions along with specific directions for answering them.

EVALUATING TESTS

All instructors evaluate their students. But how many instructors evaluate their tests? In other words, how many instructors really take a hard look at the responses given by their students?

After each written test, the instructor should examine all of the responses to every question. If the majority

of your students miss a particular question, you may assume that it was written poorly or the material might not have been covered well in class.

In any event, it probably wasn't the fault of your students. In the case of poorly written questions, you should give all of your students the full value of the question since it really wasn't fair.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

Don't make your tests so difficult that the class average is ridiculously low, and then grade your students on a "curve." If the average score is 50%, for example, it means that the average student only understands half of the material that was taught. Such a test serves little purpose; it's far too difficult and needs to be simplified.

On the other hand, you shouldn't give a test that's so easy that everyone in the class gets 100%. Clearly, you must prepare your tests and test

questions with just the right level of difficulty.

THE LAST REP

Courses in strength and fitness continue to grow at the scholastic level. As an instructor, you can improve your effectiveness by taking the course from the weight room to the classroom.

FIG. 1

PART I, LONG-ANSWER:

Directions: Read each statement below and answer it in 1 or 2 paragraphs. Be concise.

1. Describe the four guidelines that are necessary for developing and improving aerobic fitness. (8 pts.)
2. Give two reasons why most females cannot significantly increase the size of their muscles. (4 pts.)

PART II, SHORT-ANSWER:

Directions: Read each statement

below and answer it in 1 or 2 sentences. Be brief but to the point.

3. List one advantage that dumbbells have over barbells. (2pts.)
4. Define the term "hypertrophy." (2 pts.)

PART III, COMPLETION:

Directions: Read each statement below and fill in the blank with your response.

5. The horseshoe-shaped muscle located on the back of the upper arm is the _____. (2 pts.)
6. The muscle that is the antagonistic counterpart of the quadriceps is the _____. (2 pts.)

PART IV, MULTIPLE-CHOICE (2 PTS. EACH):

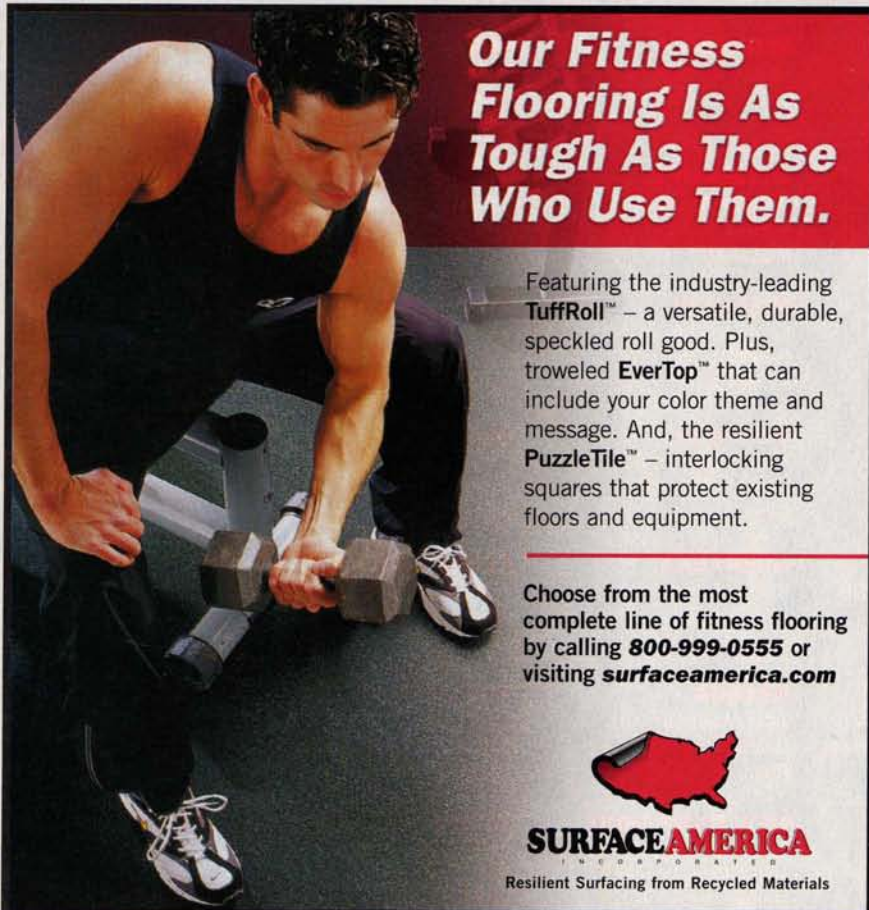
Directions: Read each of the following questions and select the best response from the given alternatives. Place your selection in the blank to the left of the question number.

- _____ 7. What portion of the deltoid is exercised during a front raise?
 - A. distal
 - B. middle
 - C. anterior
 - D. posterior
- _____ 8. What is a factor that influences flexibility?
 - A. age
 - B. gender
 - C. physical activity
 - D. all of the above

PART V, TRUE-FALSE (1 PT. EACH):

Directions: Read each statement below and decide whether it is true or false.

- If the statement is true, put an "A" in the blank to the left of the question number. If the statement is false, put a "B" in the blank to the left of the question number.
- _____ 9. The body's preferred fuel source during intense exercise is carbohydrate.
 - _____ 10. Muscles turn into fat during periods of inactivity. ■



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